# Around the Galleries

By RICHARD CHEALES

The people in **Karin Jaroszynska's** paintings (on view at **Everard Read Gallery**) have an eerie remoteness that is more dreamlike than uncanny or sinister.

The people sit or stand, watching: they behave (if you can say that characters in paintings have a life of their own) like slightly smug cats at the moment when a mouse wrongly presumes that the cat has forgotten it.

Their watchfulness isn't intent. Nor malevolent. It is a placid kind of sadism that (in Jaroszynska's hands) takes on a timelessness which tends to suggest that these could be characters from any age who get a kind of flickering, abstracted contentment from watching the oppressed writhe, squirm and agonise. They are indifferent to emotion — just mildly curious.

The drawing/painting aplomb is utterly subservient to the Jaroszynska people with their donkey-large heads and their secretive smiles, smirks, leers — and silences. They do not communicate: they tend somehow to share their silent conspiracy — superior beings, frozen in time, watching the centuries slide by.

They are not ominous: they are not ugly (most certainly not beautiful!): they are indifferent to everything except what they see beyond you. Imagine a roomful of dowdy Mona Lisas, and you have an idea of the enigmatic mood which Jaroszynska pursues. Her at least 10-metres-long oil painting (surely the largest ever attempted by an artist in South Africa) is far more sophisticatedly slick than her other pieces. Again, it is a silent, near-frozen world (or underworld) she depicts, with people objects, animals, water and mountains appearing to be from some vast, reeled-out haunting dream that never changes but, endlessly, repeats itself. The exhibition is not chilling or spooky: it is just weird — zombie souls trapped by the camera of Jaroszynska's mind, at moments of lethargic, hesitant (even jerky) movement, only the eyes forever watching . . .